

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes
August 31, 2021 Virtual Meeting Platform

Select Board members present: Rita Farrell/Chair, Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, and Eric Stocker
Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary
Other Staff present: Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director Walter Tibbetts; Mary David and Miriam DeFant/Conservation Commission

Farrell calls the meeting to order at 5:34pm.

Public Comment: None offered.

Agenda Review: No changes. The joint meeting with the Lake Wyola Advisory Committee (LWAC) is scheduled for 9.14.21; Torres will send the Board and LWAC Chair Mark Rivers relevant background material in advance of the meeting.

Discussion Topics:

1. PFA's Update: Torres: DEP has received recent test results and, for the most part, the newest results are low; some retests will need to be done; letters are being mailed to those with low results; the Town Hall reading was 4.5 which is very minimal; the circle going out from the Fire Department does not seem to be expanding; some house filters have been installed and the search for funding to assist with the cost of filters is ongoing.
2. Fire Chief's Update: Farrell: the purpose of the discussion is to begin considering the future of the Fire Department and what Fire Chief Tibbetts envisions for the transition. Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director (EMD) Walter Tibbetts: it is his intention to retire at the end of his contract (6.30.22); he has, however, yet to make an official decision. Torres confirms that accumulated vacation time does not have to be used prior to retirement; policy allows carry over of one year of vacation time and any unused time is paid at the time of departure. During the transition period, Tibbetts does not plan to use his accumulated vacation time in a lump sum fashion prior to 6.30.21.

Makepeace-O'Neil: the job description needs to be reviewed and the Board needs to decide what the position will look like after Tibbetts leaves. Tibbetts has been Chief for 26 years and has been involved with other towns' searches for fire chiefs. Torres: the Board needs to consider and compare Shutesbury's needs with those of other towns, observe what services are being provided, i.e., types of calls, and determine what the best structure will be moving forward. Torres suggests creating a committee, including Tibbetts, to conduct research and analysis. Tibbetts affirms the need to determine what the Board is looking for before beginning a search. Farrell: the Board needs to define the research group charge; analysis, to begin this fall, will include a candidate search timeline. Torres will create a tentative search committee timeline for the 9.14.21 meeting.

Farrell notes that Tibbett's monthly reports have not been routinely done and that having this data will be very important for planning purposes. Tibbetts explains that he has been very busy with other priorities, i.e., the new radio system; he intends to renew the practice of compiling the reports, will be able to reconstruct data for the past months, and agrees to provide the reports by 9.30.21; the reports will include changes in call volume due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Tibbetts: there are currently nine firefighters available for

calls; call volume is on track to be an average year. Stocker: Shutesbury is fortunate to have a robust Chief and EMD; very few local towns have the level of service we have been lucky to have. It is noted that this is the time to consider different models for managing a fire department; available talent is a significant factor. Select Board members thank and appreciate Tibbetts for his many years of service.

Per Tibbetts, the new radio system for the Police and Fire Departments is working very well; he is working with Torres and Highway Superintendent Tim Hunting to accomplish the Department's paving project. Per Torres, \$25,000 has been allocated for the project.

3. Town Administrator Updates:

- a. Locks Pond Culvert: there is no definite start date; the concrete structure is to be delivered in late September; the current problem is the delay in National Grid's removal of a pole; they have been alerted to the seriousness of their delay because excavation cannot start until this pole is moved; detour signs are ready.
- b. Lot O-32: the Highway Department rented an excavator to clear the debris piles; one pile was mostly household trash, cans and broken glass; it is a work in progress; dumpsters are being used; old barbed wire fencing is also being removed.
- c. Town Hall Cooling Station: air conditioning has been installed; thus far, no attendees.
- d. Police Department: Per Officer in Charge Sergeant Burgess, regulations for the POST bridge academy are pending; Burgess is fully qualified to attend the academy to become accredited as full time officer; there will be an impact on some of the part-timers; Burgess expects the academy to start in October 2021. POST also impacts the Union contract; the plan is for the contract to be ready for Select Board review after the union negotiation committee's next meeting. Torres will ask Burgess for a report on how the training will impact her availability; most of the training can be done online.
- e. Covid Policy: Torres will finalize the policy for the review during the 9.14.21 meeting; per Brian Maser/KP Law, the Town can require vaccinations particularly because the FDA approved the Pfizer vaccine; Shutesbury Elementary School employees have their own contract and a separate Covid -19 memorandum of understanding (MOU); there is concern that someone could decide to resign because of a mandate; a list of requirements for unvaccinated staff is an option. Farrell: review of the MOU will be helpful.
- f. Miscellaneous: Scott will attend a virtual ABCC Local Licensing Authority training on 9.9.21. Makepeace-O'Neill will draft the Select Board newsletter article due 9.17.21. Farrell will write the Select Board's FY21 annual report.

Administrative Actions:

1. Select Board members will sign #22-6 vendor warrants totaling \$39,615.75.
2. Select Board members will sign #22-6 payroll warrants totaling \$110,692.08.

At 6:22pm, Stocker moves and Makepeace-O'Neil seconds a motion to adjourn the meeting. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Avis Scott
Administrative Secretary